

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

EasyFind is menu driven indexing system much like a card catalog found in the library. It was originally designed to search and retrieve articles from Atari magazines. However, it can and has been used for almost any kind of reference information you can think of: technical journals, club newsletters, record and tape collections, and many others. It will search through files of information and will only select those records that match search phrases you enter and it will display them on screen or output them to a printer or disk file. Furthermore, it can find all the fixes that were submitted for a particular program so that instead of wasting your time typing in programs than don't work, it will run right the first time!

If you are like most Atari enthusiasts, your collection of magazines extends back many years and grows monthly. The problem of finding all that good stuff from months or years ago keeps getting worse as your collection get bigger. To determine if EasyFind will help you, just take this short three question test. If you answer yes to any of them, then EasyFind will definitely help you.

- o Have you ever looked through your collection of magazines trying to find a particular article you remember seeing, but you can't remember where?
- o Have you ever spent HOURS doing this and still not found it?
- o Have you ever typed in a program from an old magazine only to have it not work because there were bugs in it - bugs that were discovered and written up in a letter to the editor somewhere?

EasyFind is really a specialized database program specifically designed for searching and retrieving text-based information in a very quick and easy manner. As you will see, in this database there are no numeric fields or complicated record formats. Each reference record is simply seven lines of text much like on a index card or library catalog card. Because the record is so simple, you don't need any specialized data entry procedures to enter your own data, and Sierra Services offers an extensive library of magazine indexes. However, if you do want to create your own specialized indexes, the records can be created using any standard word processing program or text processor.

2. INSTALLATION

EasyFind is designed to work with any 8-bit Atari - 400, 800, 600XL, 800XL, 65XE, or 130XE with a disk drive, 48K of memory, and Atari BASIC. Optionally, it will support any device known to the Atari Operating System for output and any disk drive for input.

Installation is quite simple. You just put the disk containing EasyFind into disk drive 1 and turn the power on to your machine. There is an AUTORUN.SYS file on the disk that automatically runs anytime you boot your system. It in turn runs the BASIC program on the disk, called EASYFIND. Once EasyFind has loaded you can remove it from the disk drive and use it for other data diskettes.

EasyFind comes on a disk with Atari DOS 2.0S since this is a public-domain DOS. EasyFind will work with other Disk Operating Systems such as the double density DOS/XL from OSS, although it has not been tested with all of them.

Please note that nothing is copy-protected and you are in fact encouraged to share this program with anyone. However, we do ask that you do not give away free copies of the magazine indexes that we sell, since they are copyrighted.

3. GETTING STARTED

In order to get started quickly using EasyFind just follow these steps. You can come back to the manual later to learn more, or just use the on-line help feature, by pressing the <HELP> button to get information on all the features.

- o Put the EasyFind diskette in drive 1 and boot your system
The system will display a message of "Loading EasyFind", then there will be a title screen followed shortly by the main display.
- o Using the left and right arrow keys (without holding the CTRL key) move the wide cursor so the Disk option at the bottom of the screen is shown in reverse video. Now press <RETURN>. At the prompt for "Disk" enter the number of the disk drive containing the magazine index.
- o You will see a list of files on that disk in a window. Using the up and down arrow keys, select the file you want to search and press <RETURN>.
- o Move the wide cursor to the left until Search is shown in reverse video and press <RETURN>. At the prompt, "Phrase", enter what information you're looking for, such as "Graphics". You will be prompted again on the second line, but just press <RETURN> again.
- o Everything is now setup and ready to go. So press the <START> button to start searching and any record that contains the string "Graphics" will be displayed. Press the <ESC> key to stop searching.

4. FEATURES

EasyFind has many features that make it easy and enjoyable to use: Simple menus, On-line help, Windows, Scrolling display window, Two display formats, Output to printer or disk, Multiple search phrases, Boolean logic, and more!

After you have started up EasyFind, you will be presented with a full screen display. At this point you can activate any of EasyFind's features using the menus and certain keys, but first let's look at the screen display.

The Screen Display

The screen is divided vertically into three main areas:

- The Option Menu is at the bottom of the screen. This is where you control how and what EasyFind will do. There are nine different option choices in this menu: Search, File, Disk, Record, Keywords, Autoprint, Output, Display, and Exit.
- The Option Display is at the top of the screen. This always shows you what options you have selected: Disk, File, Record, Output, and

- The Display Window is in the middle of the screen. This is where any selected records are displayed as well as the on-line help. This is a 12 line window that scrolls.

The Keys

All of EasyFind's functions are controlled by just a few keys that are described here. Of course, there are times that you have to use the alphanumeric keys to enter in search phrases or file names when prompted, but these control the menu and display.

Left and Right Arrow Keys

Using these keys (without holding down the CTRL key) allows you to select a option from the Option Menu at the bottom of the screen. When an option is selected, is will appear in reverse video. Although the menu appears on two lines, you only have to use these two keys to select any option. Also, the menu wraps around from Search to Exit, so that if you move left past Search you wind up down at the bottom at Exit.

There are other menus that are shown in smaller windows for choices to options. For example, the AutoPrint option has a small menu of two choices: ON or OFF. The arrow keys are used to select either of these choices.

Up and Down Arrow Keys

Using these keys (without holding down the CTRL key) will find the next or last record in the current index file. Once you have told EasyFind what file to search the up arrow key will find the last record in the file and the down arrow will find the next record. If you use these keys before you enter a search phrase, EasyFind will display each record in the file.

Another use for these arrow keys is with the File option. If you activate this option, you will be shown a vertical menu of file names and you select a file name by moving up and down the list.

HELP, RETURN, START, ESC

One of the most useful features is EasyFind's context-sensitive on-line help function that is activated at any time by pressing the <HELP> key on XL and XE machines or CTRL-H on the older Atari 400's and 800's. You might be asking yourself, What is 'context-sensitive on-line help'? This simply means that when you ask for help, the computer knows what option you are using and displays help that is relevant to only that option.

The <RETURN> key is an all-purpose key. When a menu choice has been selected (it's shown in reverse video) you 'activate' that choice with the <RETURN> key. This applies both to the main Option Menu as well as the smaller menus in the windows.

When the <START> button is pressed, EasyFind 'starts' searching through the database for whatever records match the search phrases you have entered. As it finds a record it will automatically display it on the screen and then continue to look through the database for another record that matches.

The <ESC> key will stop the automatic search function and put you back in control again. This may give you some time to look at things before going on. If you press the <START> button again, EasyFind will continue its search through the database from wherever it last stopped.

5. MENU OPTIONS

The menu at the bottom of the screen controls the whole program and it is the most important to understand. Let's look at each menu item.

The Search option.

When you want to find some information in an index, you have to tell the computer what to look for. Here you can enter one or two search phrases, up to 20 characters each, and also tell the computer if it has to match both phrases in the record or only one of the phrases. For example, let's say you wanted to find out all reviews of game programs. You would enter REVIEW for the first search phrase, GAME for the second, and require that records must match BOTH phrases. This corresponds to the Boolean AND function. If you had said that records only need to match EITHER phrase, this would be like the Boolean OR function and records that had either GAME or REVIEW in them would be selected. Also, if you wanted to select or look at all records, you only need to enter an asterisk "*" for the first search phrase.

The File option

There can be many different files or databases on a disk that you would want to search. When you activate this option, a directory of all files with an extension of ".DAT" on the current disk will appear in a text window. Using the up and down arrows you select one of the files that you want to search for information. Once you have selected the file you simply press <RETURN> and that file will be OPENed for use by EasyFind.

The Disk option

You can search files that are on any disk drive including a RAMdisk drive. For those users with more than one disk drive, several different databases can be kept on multiple disk drives. When you activate this option , you will see the prompt "DISK: " in a small text window. You can enter any number between 1 and 8. If you enter an invalid number, the program defaults to drive 1 for the current drive. You must select a disk drive, before you can select a file on that drive to search for information.

The Record option

Information is accessed by records when you are searching for a given reference. The records are stored in the database file just as simple sequential records. However, when you read these records, EasyFind remembers where they are in the file and can then later access them by number. When you activate this option, you will see the prompt, "RECORD: " in a small text window. If you enter in a record number that has already been accessed, then that record will be displayed. This option is only valid in the Full screen display mode. You will also note that the current record being displayed is shown in the upper right hand corner of the Option Display area.

The Keywords option

Searching for references involves telling EasyFind to find a certain phrase or combination of phrases within the records. When you activate this option, this list of keywords is shown in the Display Window. In the Atari magazine indexes offered by Sierra Services, if these words don't occur within the title or description, they are added to the description to better organize and categorize the information.

The Autoprint option

Sometimes you want to maintain a permanent or temporary copy of the records you have found. You can do this with the AutoPrint option. When you activate this option, you are presented with a small text window in which you have two choices: ON or OFF. By using the left or right arrows, you can select your choice and then activate the choice by pressing the <RETURN> key. If you turn the AutoPrint feature ON, then every record that is selected will be sent to the output device you have selected. The form of the record depends on the Display format: if the Full display format is active, then a full seven line record will be sent to the output device. However, if you are in the Brief mode, only a single line will be output per record.

The Output option

This option works in conjunction with the AutoPrint option and can be one of the more powerful options available. It allows you to output selected records to any device you choose. Normally, this would be the printer or P: device, but it just as well can be a disk file or cassette file. When you activate this option, you will see the prompt "Output Device:" in a text window. You can enter any valid device specification up to 15 characters in length and just end your entry by pressing <RETURN>. After you have entered your new device specification, the old output device is closed and the new one is opened for output. For example, if you want to create subsets of your database file, you can enter a disk file name as the Output Device. Then, whenever records are selected and the AutoPrint option is on, they will be saved in the disk file. Please note that you have to enter a new device name before the old file will be closed.

The Display option

There are two display formats for viewing records in a database file. They are the Full and Brief format. As we mentioned earlier, EasyFind associates seven lines of text together and that becomes the 'record' for this program. The Full format displays all seven lines of the record in the Display Window. The Brief format only displays one line per record, but can show up to 11 records on the screen at once. The one line includes the record number, the month, and up to 31 characters of the title. You can toggle back and forth between the Full and Brief display and here is where it is most useful. For example, if you were searching a database file and you expected to find a lot of records that matched, you might want to specify the Brief format. When you saw a title that looked like the right one, you could then select the Full format and see the complete record. Once you were done, you can go back to the Brief display, and the screen will be the same as before you went into the Full display mode.

The Exit option

This is the easiest option of all. This simply closes all the files, stops the EasyFind program, and returns you to BASIC.

6. INDEX FILES

As we said earlier, EasyFind is a specialized database program that was originally designed to search and retrieve references to articles and programs in Atari magazines. The databases that contain this information are called index files, since they are essentially card or magazine indexes. The index files have a very simple design, but because of its simplicity, it is also very flexible.

File Format

All database programs work with records and EasyFind is no different in that respect, but the definition of a record is slightly different from what you might expect. A record is simply a collection of related data items, usually called fields. However, for EasyFind, a record is a collection of seven lines or strings of information. There are no fields or specialized formats. Anything you want can be entered in these lines or strings.

Actually, each of these lines or strings is a 'record' as far as the Atari I/O systems is concerned, since it considers a record to be some number of contiguous bytes terminated by a End Of Line (EOL) or Return character.

Here is the format of the file that EasyFind expects to read. Each line must be 39 characters or less and it must be terminated by a End Of Line character. Anytime you PRINT a string in BASIC, it is terminated by a End Of Line character and most all word processors do also.

Line 1: Magazine, Month, Year, Page, Author
(Each of these "fields" should be separated by a space)

Line 2: Title or article

Line 3: Description of article

Line 4: Description of article

Line 5: Description of article

Line 6: Description of article

Line 7: Description of article

NOTE:

Although EasyFind doesn't care what information is in these seven lines as far as searching and retrieving is concerned, the Brief format will look for a space between the Magazine and Month in the first 10 characters of line 1. If it finds a space, it takes the next three characters and displays them as the month. It also uses the first 31 characters of Line 2 in the display as the Title.

How to Create Your Own Indexes

The easiest way to create your own index files is using a standard word processor that is compatible with AtariWriter format. For each database record, enter up to seven lines and terminate each line by pressing the <RETURN>. You must end each line with a <RETURN>. Do not use the word wrap feature.

You don't have to fill in each line. For example, if you only have 5 lines of useful information for one record, just press the <RETURN> twice for each of the two missing lines. This in effect gives you 5 actual lines and 2 empty lines. The only rule here, is that each record must have 7 lines, whether they are empty or not.

Another way to create an index file would be with a simple BASIC program such as this:

```
10 OPEN #1,8,0,"INDEX.DAT"
20 DIM LINE$(39)
30 INPUT LINE$
40 PRINT #1;LINE$
50 GOTO 30
```

Once you are done entering data, just press the BREAK key and close the file by entering CLOSE #1 in immediate mode.

NOTE:

EasyFind expects each index file to have a file extention of ".DAT". When the File option is activated, it only allows you to select or open a file with this extension. The following are examples of file names that EasyFind would recognize: ANALOG85.DAT, MYDATA.DAT

7. EXAMPLE

Let's step through an example of how you might use EasyFind if you wanted to find some information of Player/Missle graphics. After you start up EasyFind, you will be presented with a full screen display. Now do the following:

- o Press the right arrow key until File is selected and press <RETURN>
- o You will now see a small window in the middle of the screen with the prompt "Disk: ". Let's assume your index file is in disk drive 1 and it is called "ANALOG86.DAT".
- o Enter 1 and press <RETURN>. EasyFind will now read the disk directory on disk 1 and will display that directory in a window in the middle of the screen.
- o Press the down arrow until the file "ANALOG86.DAT" is selected, then press <RETURN>. The file will now be opened.
- o Press the left arrow key until Search is selected, then press <RETURN>.
- o You now see a window in the middle of the screen with a prompt, "Phrase : ". Enter P/M and press <RETURN>.

- o You will still be in the same window and the same prompt, but on the second line. Just press <RETURN>.
- o Now to start searching, press the <START> button. You should see the record number in the upper right hand corner of the screen counting upward. As soon as a record is found that contains the string "P/M" is found, it will be displayed.
- o In order to stop searching, you press the <ESC> key. After, the first record is found, press the <ESC> key.
- o In order to continue searching, you press the <START> button again and the searching will continue from where you left off in the index file.

8. CUSTOMER SERVICE

Our policy on Customer Service is quite simple. If for any reason, you are not satisfied with any purchase you have made, simply return it to us and you will be issued a complete refund. Also, we will replace any defective disk free of charge that is returned to us, other than that caused by negligence.

We will provide free telephone assistance to the best of our ability. However, if your question is complicated, we suggest that you send a letter describing your problem or situation. All letters sent in will be answered in a timely manner.

Sierra Services
P.O. Box 40454
Bellevue, WA 98004
(206) 881-0512

5: Description of article

Line 6: Description of article